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## Business & Stocks

Top stories from The Mercury News

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# Chinese group unites high-tech minorities

## COMPUTER SOCIETY TO HOLD 14TH ANNUAL MEETING

BY MARIAN LIU

Mercury News

When Mark Shir ventured into Silicon Valley two decades ago, he was one of the very few Chinese.

Now, as chairman emeritus of the Silicon Valley Chinese American Computer Association, he helps oversee 400 local companies. They are mostly Chinese *owned*, with combined annual revenue of \$70 billion, proving that not only has this minority sought the American dream, it has conquered it.

“When we first started 20 years ago, it was difficult to break the glass ceiling,” said Shir, an immigrant from Taiwan. “But we are the best of our origins, the ones that take risks, like the ones on the Mayflower.”

Tonight the association is meeting for its 14th annual conference, with Rep. Mike Honda, D-San Jose, as keynote speaker and Chinese singer Julie Sue as entertainment.

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More than 800 people are expected.

### **Humble beginnings**

Like Shir, many members are from humble origins overseas. Shir studied in Taiwan and was one of the first to study at California State University, Hayward for his management information systems degree. After learning skills at more mainstream companies, like the American Heart Association, he started his own company, the EPC Group, which consults with other Silicon Valley companies in doing business with mainland China.



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Chairman Saul Yeung also started from the grass roots level. An immigrant from mainland China, he, like many others in Silicon Valley, fiddled with computer parts in his garage. He would occasionally build computers for his friends, but as orders grew, he started charging and hiring others to help. This developed into Central Computer Systems, one of the largest retailers of computer parts in the valley.

Many others started like Yeung, importing cheaper parts from Taiwan, selling them for as much as a 100 percent profit.

As the companies grew, they encountered customers with credit problems, but because many in the Chinese community were less likely to turn to the outside for help, they formed an association to root out customers with bad credit.

### **Support system**

“The association allowed us to share information, to negotiate together, and to cooperate with different vendors like Microsoft, IBM and Intel,” Yeung said.

The association was established in 1988. Along with the local 400 companies, it includes 10,000 companies worldwide, from such areas as Singapore, China, Taiwan and Hong Kong. In addition, there are more than 300 companies in Los Angeles, 200 on the East Coast and 100 in Canada.

“The association is a bridge of Chinese-Americans in high tech with high-tech government officials in mainland China,” said Michael Chen, vice chairman of the association and chairman and chief executive of his own company, AITech.

Yeung attributes this success to a fusion of eastern and western thinking.


``We also know the significance of hardship," said Yeung, whose first job in the United States was as a dishwasher, then busboy, then waiter. ``So we work harder and appreciate anything we get in this society."

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